Melissa Wargo

From: [redacted]
Sent: [redacted]ebruary 12, 2026 2:00 PM
To: Steve Lillard
Cc: J1 - Doug Farmer; Shea Browning; Melissa Wargo; Mike Byers
Subject: Re: March to the Polls proposed route

[redacted]

From: Steve Lillard <sdlillard@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: [redacted]
Cc: J1 - Doug Farmer <dafarmer@jacksonnc.org>; Shea Browning <srbrowning@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>; Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: March to the Polls proposed route

[redacted]

I received a call from Sheriff Farmer.

He was notified about your plans and wanted to see your proposed timeline.

I am forwarding the email that you sent to me so that he has this information.

If anything changes you will need to advise both my office and Sheriff Farmer so that the appropriate adjustments can be made.

Melissa Wargo

From: Jeffrey Hughes
Sent: Wednesday, February 11, 2026 4:41 PM
To: Sam Miller; Melissa Wargo; Mike Byers; Shea Browning
Cc: Paul Hammer
Subject: Re: College Democrats At WCU March

Thanks

Get Outlook for iOS

From: Sam Miller <sammiller@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, February 11, 2026 4:19:10 PM
To: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>; Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>; Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>; Shea Browning <srbrowning@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>; Paul Hammer <pwhammer@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: College Democrats At WCU March

Jeff - Go ahead and email College Dems with the following. - Sam

[redacted]

As I said when we met, safety should be your priority. Thanks for sharing that Chief Lillard did not approve your route plans. As Director of Campus Activities, I will not approve your proposed routes. Campus Activities can assist you with reservations requests for on-campus spaces before and after your march.

Also as a reminder, on your plans to offer a shuttle February 21st and 28th you will need to contact Parking Services to discuss the pick-up and drop-off location. Please remember to complete a reservation request in 25Live for the waiting space in the University Center. Again, WCU will provide a weekday shuttle during early voting and on election day.

Thanks, and take care.

From: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Date: Tuesday, February 10, 2026 at 6:53 PM
To: Sam Miller <sammiller@email.wcu.edu>, Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>, Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>, Shea Browning <srbrowning@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>, Paul Hammer <pwhammer@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: College Democrats At WCU March

I'm good with that Sam.

—-
Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.

Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Western Carolina University

From: Sam Miller <sammiller@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, February 10, 2026 6:45:55 PM
To: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>; Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>; Shea Browning <srbrowning@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>; Paul Hammer <pwhammer@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: College Democrats At WCU March

All - I think something like this. - Sam

[redacted]

As I said when we met, safety should be your priority. Thanks for sharing that Chief Lillard did not approve your route plans. As Director of Campus Activities, I will not approve your proposed routes. Campus Activities can assist you with reservations requests for on-campus spaces before and after your march.

Also as a reminder, on your plans to offer a shuttle February 21st and 28th you will need to contact Parking Services to discuss the pick-up and drop-off location. Please remember to complete a reservation request in 25Live for the waiting space in the University Center. Again, WCU will provide a weekday shuttle during early voting and on election day.

Thanks, and take care.

From: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>
Date: Tuesday, February 10, 2026 at 5:27 PM
To: Sam Miller <sammiller@email.wcu.edu>, Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>, Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>, Shea Browning <srbrowning@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>, Paul Hammer <pwhammer@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: FW: College Democrats At WCU March

Please se[redacted]esponse below. I will communicate with him tomorrow. Please let me know if you have any thoughts you would like me to share.

Thanks, and take care.

From: [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, February 10, 2026 4:39 PM
To: Paul Hammer <pwhammer@email.wcu.edu>; Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: College Democrats At WCU March

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: Paul Hammer <pwhammer@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, February 10, 2026 12:07 PM
To: [redacted]
Subject: RE: College Democrats At WCU March

Thank you [redacted] Glad to hear that you've got that meeting with Chief Lillard and looking forward to hearing about any updates on your side afterwards.

Best regards,

Western Carolina University

Paul Hammer
Associate Director for Guest Services
Department of Campus Activities
Western Carolina University | University Center 210N
1 University Way, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.2393 | pwhammer@email.wcu.edu
Pronouns: he/him/his

From: [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, February 10, 2026 12:05 PM
To: Paul Hammer <pwhammer@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: College Democrats At WCU March

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: Paul Hammer <pwhammer@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, February 10, 2026 12:03:17 PM
T [redacted]
Cc: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: RE: College Democrats At WCU March

Hell[redacted]

I hope that you are doing well. I wanted to reach back out to see if you had any updates about your planned march event on February 13th. Please let us know if you need any assistance filling out the March Permit for that event or if you have any questions that we can help answer!

Thanks[redacted]

Best regards,

Western Carolina University

Paul Hammer
Associate Director for Guest Services
Department of Campus Activities
Western Carolina University | University Center 210N
1 University Way, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.2393 | pwhammer@email.wcu.edu
Pronouns: he/him/his

From: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, February 6, 2026 6:06 PM
[redacted]
Cc: Paul Hammer <pwhammer@email.wcu.edu>; Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: College Democrats At WCU March

[redacted]

Thanks for meeting this morning.

I want to recap our meeting. Please let me know if I missed any details.

On February 13th, the College Democrats at WCU are planning a march-to-the-polls event. Your plan is to meet fellow students at the UC Central Plaza at 2:00 PM (expected attendance: 30 – 50 students). You will gather and start marching around 2:15 PM to the Cullowhee Recreation Center to vote. Your team will wait until everyone has voted, then march back to campus. I would like to encourage you to keep all of your participants on the sidewalk, where possible, as you travel to and from the voting site. As I mentioned in our meeting, safety should be a priority, and you have been made aware that the University will be running a weekday shuttle during early voting and on election day. You also mentioned that the Democratic Party Chair, Cody Lewis, has offered to assist your team and may be on site for this event. After you return to campus, you plan to gather everyone in a UC meeting room to celebrate and have pizza.

For this event, remember to submit a march permit to our office. Because you are not using an approved march route, you will need to meet with the University Chief of Police to review your on campus route for approval. Be advised, Chief Lillard reserves the right to decline to approve any alternate march route. In addition, as we discussed, I advise that you contact the Highway Patrol to request assistance with crossing Highway 107. And don't forget to complete a reservation request in 25Live for the space in the University Center.

On February 21st and 28th, the College Democrats at WCU plan to run shuttle vans to the polls. Your plan is to transport fellow students to the Cullowhee Recreation Center to vote. The vans will operate from 10:00 AM to 12:00 noon and from 12:45 PM to 3:00 PM on each day. You indicated that you would like the pick-up and drop-off location to be at the back of the Post Office at the University Center. In addition, you would like to reserve a space in the University Center as a waiting room.

For this event, remember to contact Parking Services to discuss the pick-up and drop-off location. And don't forget to complete a reservation request in 25Live for the space in the University Center.

We will communicate with you again as we progress through this process.

Thanks, and take care.

Melissa Wargo

From: Melissa Wargo
Sent: Wednesday, February 11, 2026 2:40 PM
To: Richard Starnes; Carol Burton
Subject: FW: March to the Polls proposed route
Attachments: March to the Polls Route MAP.png

For your situational awareness

Western Carolina University

Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Office of the Chancellor
Western Carolina University | H.F. Robinson, Suite 501
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.7100 | c: (828) 399.1230 | wargo@wcu.edu

From: Steve Lillard <sdlillard@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, February 11, 2026 2:02 PM
To: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>; Sam Miller <sammiller@email.wcu.edu>; Shea Browning <srbrowning@email.wcu.edu>; Betsy Aspinwall <baspinwall@email.wcu.edu>; Kelly Tornow <ktornow@email.wcu.edu>; Heather Baker <hbaker@email.wcu.edu>; Brian Thomas <bthomas@email.wcu.edu>; Chris Holcombe <cwholcombe@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Fw: March to the Polls proposed route

I apologize.

I meant to forward this earlier.

Steve

Western Carolina University

Steven D. Lillard
Chief of Police
Western Carolina University Police
Western Carolina University | Camp Annex
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.7301 | sdlillard@email.wcu.edu

[redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, February 10, 2026 6:16 PM

808 West Apartments
Bardo Arts Center
at's Table
107
Liston B. Ramsey
Reg'l Activity Ctr
Tuckasegee River
38 min
1.7 miles
Forest Hills
107
Cullowhee Mountain Rd

Melissa Wargo

From: Melissa Wargo
Sent: Wednesday, February 11, 2026 10:50 AM
To: Julia Duvall
Cc: Rich Price; Paul Garner
Subject: RE: Student transportation to voting site - WLOS

I would be fine with Joy, but please confirm with Carol.

Thanks,
M

Western Carolina University

Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Office of the Chancellor
Western Carolina University | H.F. Robinson, Suite 501
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.7100 | c: (828) 399.1230 | wargo@wcu.edu

From: Julia Duvall <jduvall@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, February 11, 2026 10:31 AM
To: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Rich Price <rprice@email.wcu.edu>; Paul Garner <pgarner@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Student transportation to voting site - WLOS

Good morning Melissa,

Jennifer Emert from WLOS wants to come do a story tomorrow about student transportation to the voting site. She wants to talk to some students, get some b-roll and also talk to someone from CCESL. Would you be ok with her talking to Joy Mischley and Jenna Kubiak or do you have someone else you would prefer? Or if you would just like to keep it to student perspectives, I can let her know we do not have anyone available to speak on camera.

Thanks!

Julia

Western Carolina University

Julia Hartbarger Duvall '15
Assistant Director of Communications
University Communications and Marketing
Western Carolina University | H.F. Robinson Building
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723

o: (828) 227.2197 | jduvall@wcu.edu

Melissa Wargo

From: Melissa Wargo
Sent: Tuesday, February 10, 2026 6:54 PM
To: Sam Miller; Jeffrey Hughes; Mike Byers; Shea Browning
Cc: Jeffrey Hughes; Paul Hammer
Subject: Re: College Democrats At WCU March

I'm good with that Sam.

—-
Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Western Carolina University

From: Sam Miller <sammiller@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, February 10, 2026 6:45:55 PM
To: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>; Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>; Shea Browning <srbrowning@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>; Paul Hammer <pwhammer@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: College Democrats At WCU March

All - I think something like this. - Sam

[redacted]

As I said when we met, safety should be your priority. Thanks for sharing that Chief Lillard did not approve your route plans. As Director of Campus Activities, I will not approve your proposed routes. Campus Activities can assist you with reservations requests for on-campus spaces before and after your march.

Also as a reminder, on your plans to offer a shuttle February 21st and 28th you will need to contact Parking Services to discuss the pick-up and drop-off location. Please remember to complete a reservation request in 25Live for the waiting space in the University Center. Again, WCU will provide a weekday shuttle during early voting and on election day.

Thanks, and take care.

From: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>
Date: Tuesday, February 10, 2026 at 5:27 PM
To: Sam Miller <sammiller@email.wcu.edu>, Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>, Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>, Shea Browning <srbrowning@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>, Paul Hammer <pwhammer@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: FW: College Democrats At WCU March

Melissa Wargo

From: Melissa Wargo
Sent: Tuesday, February 10, 2026 2:51 PM
To: Steve Lillard; Shea Browning; Jeffrey Hughes; Sam Miller; Betsy Aspinwall; Kelly Tornow; Heather Baker; Brian Thomas; Chris Holcombe; Mike Byers
Subject: Re: College Democrats at WCU March

Thanks Chief!

—-
Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Western Carolina University

From: Steve Lillard <sdlillard@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, February 10, 2026 2:46:31 PM
To: Shea Browning <srbrowning@email.wcu.edu>; Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>; Sam Miller <sammiller@email.wcu.edu>; Betsy Aspinwall <baspinwall@email.wcu.edu>; Kelly Tornow <ktornow@email.wcu.edu>; Heather Baker <hbaker@email.wcu.edu>; Brian Thomas <bthomas@email.wcu.edu>; Chris Holcombe <cwholcombe@email.wcu.edu>; Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: College Democrats at WCU March

Good Afternoon,

I just met wi[redacted]nd advised him that I could not approve the route based on the event not being entirely on our campus.

I advised him that we would make efforts to help the group move across campus safely to the intersection of Speedwell Road and Forrest Hills Road.

He understood that but then advised that the group was considering staying on Forrest Hills until they reach 107.

I advised him that our protocol would remain the same and they would need to rely upon the crosswalk signals to cross 107.

He still expects to have about 50 individuals and they are planning to walk rain or shine.

I also mentioned to him our concerns about school traffic at CVS and advised he understood.

Please let me know if you need any further and once I get a definitive answer as to which route they will take I will prepare my staff to help out.

Thanks.

Steve

Steven D. Lillard
Chief of Police
Western Carolina University Police
Western Carolina University | Camp Annex
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.7301 | sdlillard@email.wcu.edu

From: Shea Browning <srbrowning@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, February 6, 2026 4:58 PM
To: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>; Sam Miller <sammiller@email.wcu.edu>; Betsy Aspinwall <baspinwall@email.wcu.edu>; Kelly Tornow <ktornow@email.wcu.edu>; Heather Baker <hbaker@email.wcu.edu>; Steve Lillard <sdlillard@email.wcu.edu>; Brian Thomas <bthomas@email.wcu.edu>; Chris Holcombe <cwholcombe@email.wcu.edu>; Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: College Democrats at WCU March

Jeff and all,

Please see the bold edits.

Shea Browning
General Counsel

From: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>
Date: Friday, February 6, 2026 at 2:36 PM
To: Sam Miller <sammiller@email.wcu.edu>, Betsy Aspinwall <baspinwall@email.wcu.edu>, Shea Browning <srbrowning@email.wcu.edu>, Kelly Tornow <ktornow@email.wcu.edu>, Heather Baker <hbaker@email.wcu.edu>, Steve Lillard <sdlillard@email.wcu.edu>, Brian Thomas <bthomas@email.wcu.edu>, Chris Holcombe <cwholcombe@email.wcu.edu>, Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>, Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: College Democrats at WCU March

Below is my follow-up email t[redacted] Please share your thoughts.

Thanks, and take care

[redacted]

Thanks for meeting this morning.

I want to recap our meeting. Please let me know if I missed any details.

On February 13th, the College Democrats at WCU are planning a march-to-the-polls event. Your plan is to meet fellow students at the UC Central Plaza at 2:00 PM (expected attendance: 30 – 50 students). You will gather and start marching around 2:15 PM to the Cullowhee Recreation Center to vote. Your team will wait until everyone has voted, then march back to campus. I would like to encourage you to keep all

of your participants on the sidewalk, where possible, as you travel to and from the voting site. As I mentioned in our meeting, safety should be a priority, **and you have been made aware that the University will be running a weekday shuttle during early voting and on election day.** You also mentioned that the Democratic Party Chair, Cody Lewis, has offered to assist your team and may be on site for this event. After you return to campus, you plan to gather everyone in a UC meeting room to celebrate and have pizza.

For this event, remember to submit a march permit to our office. **Because you are not using an approved march route, you will need to meet with the University Chief of Police to review your on campus route for approval. Be advised, Chief Lillard reserves the right to decline to approve any alternate march route.** In addition, as we discussed, I advise that you contact the Highway Patrol to request assistance with crossing Highway 107. And don't forget to complete a reservation request in 25Live for the space in the University Center.

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For this event, remember to contact Parking Services to discuss the pick-up and drop-off location. And don't forget to complete a reservation request in 25Live for the space in the University Center.

We will communicate with you again as we progress through this process.

Thanks, and take care.

Melissa Wargo

From: Julia Duvall
Sent: Monday, February 9, 2026 7:46 PM
To: Melissa Wargo; Paul Garner; Rich Price
Subject: Re: Judge rejects early voting sites at Western Carolina University

Thank you so much! This is great. I will send to WUNC first thing in the morning.

Julia Hartbarger Duvall
Assistant Director of Communications
University Communications and Marketing
Western Carolina University
828.227.2197 | jduvall@wcu.edu

From: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Monday, February 9, 2026 7:04:09 PM
To: Julia Duvall <jduvall@email.wcu.edu>; Paul Garner <pgarner@email.wcu.edu>; Rich Price <rprice@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Judge rejects early voting sites at Western Carolina University

I had some edits. See my suggested revision below. Just tried to make it more succinct.

Western Carolina University supports the civic activity of students, faculty, and staff and encourages participation in the voting process.

On February 9, 2026, Judge Osteen denied a request for a temporary restraining order for a preliminary injunction regarding the placement of an early voting site on campus. Here is the link to Judge Osteen's order.

WCU remains strongly committed to student engagement in the democratic process. To support voter access, WCU will provide a week-day shuttle service during the early voting period from the University Center to the closest early voting site in Jackson County. Shuttle service will also be provided on Election Day.

Thanks, Julia!

—-

Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Western Carolina University

From: Julia Duvall <jduvall@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Monday, February 9, 2026 5:18 PM
To: Paul Garner <pgarner@email.wcu.edu>; Rich Price <rprice@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Judge rejects early voting sites at Western Carolina University

Thank you!!

Julia Hartbarger Duvall '15

Assistant Director of Communications

University Communications and Marketing
Western Carolina University | H.F. Robinson Building
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.2197 | jduvall@wcu.edu

From: Paul Garner <pgarner@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Monday, February 9, 2026 5:11 PM
To: Julia Duvall <jduvall@email.wcu.edu>; Rich Price <rprice@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Judge rejects early voting sites at Western Carolina University

I think this looks good.

Paul

From: Julia Duvall <jduvall@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Monday, February 9, 2026 5:03 PM
To: Rich Price <rprice@email.wcu.edu>; Paul Garner <pgarner@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Fw: Judge rejects early voting sites at Western Carolina University

Hi all,

Christy and I received this media inquiry earlier today. We have put together a draft statement. Let me know what edits are needed. Thanks!

Western Carolina University supports the civic activity of students, faculty, and staff and encourages participation in the voting process.

On February 9, 2026, Judge Osteen denied a request for a temporary restraining order **for** a preliminary injunction regarding the placement of an early voting site on campus. Here is the link to Judge Osteen's order denying the plaintiffs' motion for a temporary restraining order (TRO) or preliminary injunction (PI).

To support voter access, WCU Transportation will provide a shuttle service during the early voting period from the University Center to the closest early voting site in Jackson County.

WCU Transportation will also provide service on Election Day to the Precinct voting site.

WCU remains committed to student access of the resources they need to participate in the democratic process.

Julia Hartbarger Duvall '15

Assistant Director of Communications

University Communications and Marketing
Western Carolina University | H.F. Robinson Building
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.2197 | jduvall@wcu.edu

From: Piggott, Sharryse Monique <spiggott@wunc.org>
Sent: Monday, February 9, 2026 10:43 AM
To: Julia Duvall <jduvall@email.wcu.edu>; Christy Agner <cagner@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Judge rejects early voting sites at Western Carolina University

Some people who received this message don't often get email from spiggott@wunc.org. Learn why this is important

WARNING: This email originated from a non-WCU email account. Do not click links or open attachments unless you are confident the content is safe.

Hi,

This Sharryse with WUNC again. Just reaching out to confirm the following:

-Did U.S. District Judge William Osteen reject early voting sites at NC A&T State University, UNC Greensboro, and Western Carolina University?

-If so, what was the explanation given?

-Why do students want the early voting sites at these specific campuses?

Please share any additional details.

Best,
Sharryse Piggott
reporter

Melissa Wargo

From: Julia Duvall
Sent: Monday, February 9, 2026 5:18 PM
To: Paul Garner; Rich Price; Melissa Wargo
Subject: Re: Judge rejects early voting sites at Western Carolina University

Thank you!!

Western Carolina University

Julia Hartbarger Duvall '15

Assistant Director of Communications

University Communications and Marketing
Western Carolina University | H.F. Robinson Building
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.2197 | jduvall@wcu.edu

From: Paul Garner <pgarner@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Monday, February 9, 2026 5:11 PM
To: Julia Duvall <jduvall@email.wcu.edu>; Rich Price <rprice@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Judge rejects early voting sites at Western Carolina University

I think this looks good.

Paul

From: Julia Duvall <jduvall@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Monday, February 9, 2026 5:03 PM
To: Rich Price <rprice@email.wcu.edu>; Paul Garner <pgarner@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Fw: Judge rejects early voting sites at Western Carolina University

Hi all,

Christy and I received this media inquiry earlier today. We have put together a draft statement. Let me know what edits are needed. Thanks!

Western Carolina University supports the civic activity of students, faculty, and staff and encourages participation in the voting process.

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WCU remains committed to student access of the resources they need to participate in the democratic process.

Western Carolina University

Julia Hartbarger Duvall '15

Assistant Director of Communications

University Communications and Marketing
Western Carolina University | H.F. Robinson Building
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.2197 | jduvall@wcu.edu

From: Piggott, Sharryse Monique <spiggott@wunc.org>
Sent: Monday, February 9, 2026 10:43 AM
To: Julia Duvall <jduvall@email.wcu.edu>; Christy Agner <cagner@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Judge rejects early voting sites at Western Carolina University

Some people who received this message don't often get email from spiggott@wunc.org. Learn why this is important

WARNING: This email originated from a non-WCU email account. Do not click links or open attachments unless you are confident the content is safe.

Hi,

This Sharryse with WUNC again. Just reaching out to confirm the following:

-Did U.S. District Judge William Osteen reject early voting sites at NC A&T State University, UNC Greensboro, and Western Carolina University?

-If so, what was the explanation given?

-Why do students want the early voting sites at these specific campuses?

Please share any additional details.

Best,
Sharryse Piggott
reporter

Melissa Wargo

From: Julia Duvall
Sent: Saturday, February 7, 2026 9:21 AM
To: Melissa Wargo; Richard Starnes; Paul Garner; Rich Price; Shea Browning; Christy Agner; Carol Burton
Subject: Re: Daily Tar Heel Request for Interview

Thanks so much Melissa! I will share the statement and direct her to Chris cooper for voting data.

Thanks all!

Julia Hartbarger Duvall
Assistant Director of Communications
University Communications and Marketing
Western Carolina University
828.227.2197 | jduvall@wcu.edu

From: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, February 6, 2026 8:44:08 PM
To: Richard Starnes <starnes@email.wcu.edu>; Julia Duvall <jduvall@email.wcu.edu>; Paul Garner <pgarner@email.wcu.edu>; Rich Price <rprice@email.wcu.edu>; Shea Browning <srbrowning@email.wcu.edu>; Christy Agner <cagner@email.wcu.edu>; Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Daily Tar Heel Request for Interview

Julia,

I heard from everyone. Please use the statement below. Also, we politely decline any in person interview but we do recommend they reach out to Chris Cooper for voter data.

I'm copying in Carol Burton so she can let Joy Mischley know about the statement in case she is contacted directly.

Thanks!
M

—-

Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Western Carolina University

De : Richard Starnes <starnes@email.wcu.edu>
Envoyé : vendredi, février 6, 2026 8:12 PM
À : Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>; Julia Duvall <jduvall@email.wcu.edu>; Paul Garner <pgarner@email.wcu.edu>; Rich Price <rprice@email.wcu.edu>; Shea Browning <srbrowning@email.wcu.edu>; Christy Agner <cagner@email.wcu.edu>
Objet : Re: Daily Tar Heel Request for Interview

Good with this. Also good referring to CC

Get Outlook for iOS

From: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, February 6, 2026 8:04:36 PM
To: Julia Duvall <jduvall@email.wcu.edu>; Paul Garner <pgarner@email.wcu.edu>; Rich Price <rprice@email.wcu.edu>; Richard Starnes <starnes@email.wcu.edu>; Shea Browning <srbrowning@email.wcu.edu>; Christy Agner <cagner@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Daily Tar Heel Request for Interview

All, How about something like below for a University statement? I'm also copying in Christy, Richard, and Shea for their thoughts. Welcome any edits or additions.

Richard, are you okay if we direct them to Chris Cooper for data about student voter participation?

"Western Carolina University strongly supports student civic engagement and remains committed to providing opportunities for students to exercise their right to vote. In response to broad student interest and student requests, WCU successfully hosted an early voting site for nearly a decade in partnership with the Jackson County and the State Board of Elections and would gladly continue to do so. If it is not an option to host a voting site on campus, the University plans to offer transportation to the nearest polling station for our students."

Thanks,
M
—-
Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Western Carolina University

From: Julia Duvall <jduvall@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, February 6, 2026 4:17 PM
To: Paul Garner <pgarner@email.wcu.edu>; Rich Price <rprice@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Fw: Daily Tar Heel Request for Interview

Hi all,

We just received an inquiry below about the voting site lawsuit.

-Julia

Western Carolina University

Julia Hartbarger Duvall '15

Assistant Director of Communications

University Communications and Marketing
Western Carolina University | H.F. Robinson Building
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.2197 | jduvall@wcu.edu

From: Palmer, Lorelai Lytton <lorelytt@unc.edu>
Sent: Friday, February 6, 2026 4:05 PM
To: Julia Duvall <jduvall@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Daily Tar Heel Request for Interview

You don't often get email from lorelytt@unc.edu. Learn why this is important

WARNING: This email originated from a non-WCU email account. Do not click links or open attachments unless you are confident the content is safe.

Good afternoon,

My name is Lorelai Palmer, and I am a reporter for the City & State desk at *The Daily Tar Heel*.

I am currently writing an article about the lawsuit regarding the rejection of early voting sites on North Carolina college campuses.

I would appreciate the opportunity to request a comment from you on behalf of Western Carolina University, as the Contact Assistant Director of Communications, regarding how this issue impacts your students and the WCU community. Your voice and perspective are very important to the story as the lawsuit continues. I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you or another representative about the university's perspective on on-campus early voting access, the role of polling sites in supporting student civic engagement and the impacts the decisions have on your student body.

Also, if available, I would appreciate any additional information or data about student voter participation or civic engagement, if possible.

The Daily Tar Heel's policy does not allow us to send our specific questions before an interview. However, the questions I will ask are related to student voting access, campus civic engagement, and the university's response to the lawsuit.

The deadline for my story is February 9. This story is for print and online publication in The Daily Tar Heel. My email is lorelytt@unc.edu, and my phone number is (910) 234-1380.

Thank you for your help,
Lorelai

Lorelai Palmer (she/her)
City & State Writer, The Daily Tar Heel
UNC-Chapel Hill | Class of 2028

Melissa Wargo

From: Melissa Wargo
Sent: Friday, February 6, 2026 5:03 PM
To: Shea Browning; Jeffrey Hughes; Sam Miller; Betsy Aspinwall; Kelly Tornow; Heather Baker; Steve Lillard; Brian Thomas; Chris Holcombe; Mike Byers
Subject: Re: College Democrats at WCU March

Thanks, Shea

—-
Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Western Carolina University

From: Shea Browning <srbrowning@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, February 6, 2026 4:58:33 PM
To: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>; Sam Miller <sammiller@email.wcu.edu>; Betsy Aspinwall <baspinwall@email.wcu.edu>; Kelly Tornow <ktornow@email.wcu.edu>; Heather Baker <hbaker@email.wcu.edu>; Steve Lillard <sdlillard@email.wcu.edu>; Brian Thomas <bthomas@email.wcu.edu>; Chris Holcombe <cwholcombe@email.wcu.edu>; Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: College Democrats at WCU March

Jeff and all,

Please see the bold edits.

Shea Browning
General Counsel

From: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>
Date: Friday, February 6, 2026 at 2:36 PM
To: Sam Miller <sammiller@email.wcu.edu>, Betsy Aspinwall <baspinwall@email.wcu.edu>, Shea Browning <srbrowning@email.wcu.edu>, Kelly Tornow <ktornow@email.wcu.edu>, Heather Baker <hbaker@email.wcu.edu>, Steve Lillard <sdlillard@email.wcu.edu>, Brian Thomas <bthomas@email.wcu.edu>, Chris Holcombe <cwholcombe@email.wcu.edu>, Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>, Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: College Democrats at WCU March

Below is my follow-up email to [redacted]n. Please share your thoughts.

Thanks, and take care

[redacted]

Thanks for meeting this morning.

I want to recap our meeting. Please let me know if I missed any details.

On February 13th, the College Democrats at WCU are planning a march-to-the-polls event. Your plan is to meet fellow students at the UC Central Plaza at 2:00 PM (expected attendance: 30 – 50 students). You will gather and start marching around 2:15 PM to the Cullowhee Recreation Center to vote. Your team will wait until everyone has voted, then march back to campus. I would like to encourage you to keep all of your participants on the sidewalk, where possible, as you travel to and from the voting site. As I mentioned in our meeting, safety should be a priority, **and you have been made aware that the University will be running a weekday shuttle during early voting and on election day**. You also mentioned that the Democratic Party Chair, Cody Lewis, has offered to assist your team and may be on site for this event. After you return to campus, you plan to gather everyone in a UC meeting room to celebrate and have pizza.

For this event, remember to submit a march permit to our office. **Because you are not using an approved march route, you will need to meet with the University Chief of Police to review your on campus route for approval. Be advised, Chief Lillard reserves the right to decline to approve any alternate march route.** In addition, as we discussed, I advise that you contact the Highway Patrol to request assistance with crossing Highway 107. And don't forget to complete a reservation request in 25Live for the space in the University Center.

On February 21st and 28th, the College Democrats at WCU plan to run shuttle vans to the polls. Your plan is to transport fellow students to the Cullowhee Recreation Center to vote. The vans will operate from 10:00 AM to 12:00 noon and from 12:45 PM to 3:00 PM on each day. You indicated that you would like the pick-up and drop-off location to be at the back of the Post Office at the University Center. In addition, you would like to reserve a space in the University Center as a waiting room.

For this event, remember to contact Parking Services to discuss the pick-up and drop-off location. And don't forget to complete a reservation request in 25Live for the space in the University Center.

We will communicate with you again as we progress through this process.

Thanks, and take care.

Melissa Wargo

From: Melissa Wargo
Sent: Friday, February 6, 2026 4:56 PM
To: Rich Price; Julia Duvall; Paul Garner
Subject: Re: Daily Tar Heel Request for Interview

Let me get my thoughts together on a statement. Chris Cooper can provide them the data he has about voter activity at the WCU site.

—-
Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Western Carolina University

From: Rich Price <rprice@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, February 6, 2026 4:55:23 PM
To: Julia Duvall <jduvall@email.wcu.edu>; Paul Garner <pgarner@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Daily Tar Heel Request for Interview

My suggestion would be to redirect to CESL, but I'd like for Melissa to weigh in.

Western Carolina University

Rich Price '88
Chief Marketing & Strategic Partnerships Officer
Chancellor's Division
Western Carolina University | 530 HFR
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.2979 | c: (828) 736-1556 | rprice@wcu.edu

From: Julia Duvall <jduvall@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, February 6, 2026 4:17:27 PM
To: Paul Garner <pgarner@email.wcu.edu>; Rich Price <rprice@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Fw: Daily Tar Heel Request for Interview

Hi all,

We just received an inquiry below about the voting site lawsuit.

-Julia

Julia Hartbarger Duvall '15

Assistant Director of Communications

University Communications and Marketing
Western Carolina University | H.F. Robinson Building
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.2197 | jduvall@wcu.edu

From: Palmer, Lorelai Lytton <lorelytt@unc.edu>
Sent: Friday, February 6, 2026 4:05 PM
To: Julia Duvall <jduvall@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Daily Tar Heel Request for Interview

You don't often get email from lorelytt@unc.edu. Learn why this is important

WARNING: This email originated from a non-WCU email account. Do not click links or open attachments unless you are confident the content is safe.

Good afternoon,

My name is Lorelai Palmer, and I am a reporter for the City & State desk at *The Daily Tar Heel*.

I am currently writing an article about the lawsuit regarding the rejection of early voting sites on North Carolina college campuses.

I would appreciate the opportunity to request a comment from you on behalf of Western Carolina University, as the Contact Assistant Director of Communications, regarding how this issue impacts your students and the WCU community. Your voice and perspective are very important to the story as the lawsuit continues. I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you or another representative about the university's perspective on on-campus early voting access, the role of polling sites in supporting student civic engagement and the impacts the decisions have on your student body.

Also, if available, I would appreciate any additional information or data about student voter participation or civic engagement, if possible.

The Daily Tar Heel's policy does not allow us to send our specific questions before an interview. However, the questions I will ask are related to student voting access, campus civic engagement, and the university's response to the lawsuit.

The deadline for my story is February 9. This story is for print and online publication in The Daily Tar Heel. My email is lorelytt@unc.edu, and my phone number is (910) 234-1380.

Thank you for your help,
Lorelai

Lorelai Palmer (she/her)

City & State Writer, The Daily Tar Heel
UNC-Chapel Hill | Class of 2028
B.A. Media and Journalism

Melissa Wargo

From: Melissa Wargo
Sent: Friday, February 6, 2026 4:02 PM
To: Jeffrey Hughes; Sam Miller; Betsy Aspinwall; Shea Browning; Kelly Tornow; Heather Baker; Steve Lillard; Brian Thomas; Chris Holcombe; Mike Byers
Cc: Jeffrey Hughes
Subject: Re: College Democrats at WCU March

Is there a way to tel[redacted]t since WCU is providing transportation to the polls each weekday during the election season and the College Democrats appear to be ready to offer transportation on the weekends, then a walk to the polls is unnecessary and unadvised?

—-
Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Western Carolina University

From: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, February 6, 2026 2:35:58 PM
To: Sam Miller <sammiller@email.wcu.edu>; Betsy Aspinwall <baspinwall@email.wcu.edu>; Shea Browning <srbrowning@email.wcu.edu>; Kelly Tornow <ktornow@email.wcu.edu>; Heather Baker <hbaker@email.wcu.edu>; Steve Lillard <sdlillard@email.wcu.edu>; Brian Thomas <bthomas@email.wcu.edu>; Chris Holcombe <cwholcombe@email.wcu.edu>; Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: College Democrats at WCU March

Below is my follow-up email t[redacted] Please share your thoughts.

Thanks, and take care

[redacted]

Thanks for meeting this morning.

I want to recap our meeting. Please let me know if I missed any details.

On February 13th, the College Democrats at WCU are planning a march-to-the-polls event. Your plan is to meet fellow students at the UC Central Plaza at 2:00 PM (expected attendance: 30 – 50 students). You will gather and start marching around 2:15 PM to the Cullowhee Recreation Center to vote. Your team will wait until everyone has voted, then march back to campus. I would like to encourage you to keep all of your participants on the sidewalk, where possible, as you travel to and from the voting site. As I mentioned in our meeting, safety should be a priority. You also mentioned that the Democratic Party Chair, Cody Lewis, has offered to assist your team and may be on site for this event. After you return to campus, you plan to gather everyone in a UC meeting room to celebrate and have pizza.

For this event, remember to submit a march permit to our office. Reminder: because you are not using an approved march route, you will need to meet with the University Chief of Police to review your route for approval. In addition, as we discussed, you will need to contact the Highway Patrol to request assistance with crossing Highway 107. And don't forget to complete a reservation request in 25Live for the space in the University Center.

On February 21st and 28th, the College Democrats at WCU plan to run shuttle vans to the polls. Your plan is to transport fellow students to the Cullowhee Recreation Center to vote. The vans will operate from 10:00 AM to 12:00 noon and from 12:45 PM to 3:00 PM on each day. You indicated that you would like the pick-up and drop-off location to be at the back of the Post Office at the University Center. In addition, you would like to reserve a space in the University Center as a waiting room.

For this event, remember to contact Parking Services to discuss the pick-up and drop-off location. And don't forget to complete a reservation request in 25Live for the space in the University Center.

We will communicate with you again as we progress through this process.

Thanks, and take care.

Melissa Wargo

From: Sam Miller
Sent: Friday, February 6, 2026 2:34 PM
To: Shea Browning; Steve Lillard
Cc: Jeffrey Hughes; Mike Byers; Melissa Wargo; Brian Thomas
Subject: Re: March to the Polls proposed route

Just making an observation... Depending on the timing of the march, they might also interact with Cullowhee Valley School pickup traffic. -Sam

---

From: Shea Browning <srbrowning@email.wcu.edu>
Date: Friday, February 6, 2026 at 2:23 PM
To: Steve Lillard <sdlillard@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>, Sam Miller <sammiller@email.wcu.edu>, Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>, Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>, Brian Thomas <bthomas@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: March to the Polls proposed route

I hear you Steve.

Here's what I think you should do. Don't approve the route, but just make sure these kids cross the roads safely as they troop across campus and, eventually, off campus. I do not think you need to escort them across campus and you don't need to make sure that they get to the edge of campus safely - unless a road is the edge of campus.

Thoughts?

Shea Browning
General Counsel

From: Steve Lillard <sdlillard@email.wcu.edu>
Date: Friday, February 6, 2026 at 2:09 PM
To: Shea Browning <srbrowning@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>, Sam Miller <sammiller@email.wcu.edu>, Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>, Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>, Brian Thomas <bthomas@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Fw: March to the Polls proposed route

Hey Shea,

I am certain we can come up with a plan to help the student while they are on campus due to the number of sidewalks that we have and it is a straight shot to the Speedwell intersection.

However, I am not comfortable approving a portion of the route since they are not stopping at the edge of campus and will continue on to the rec center.

It seems that if we approve part of the route then we might be accepting liability for their entire march.

Let me know if I am reading too much into this but I'd hate to get them started and then somewhere off campus they have an incident.

Let me know your thoughts and we can go from there.

Thanks.

Steve

Western Carolina University

Steven D. Lillard
Chief of Police
Western Carolina University Police
Western Carolina University | Camp Annex
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.7301 | sdlillard@email.wcu.edu

[redacted]

Sent: Friday, February 6, 2026 1:32 PM
To: Steve Lillard <sdlillard@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: March to the Polls proposed route

[redacted]

Melissa Wargo

From: Jeffrey Hughes
Sent: Thursday, February 5, 2026 9:33 AM
To: Steve Lillard; Shea Browning
Cc: Sam Miller; Mike Byers; Melissa Wargo
Subject: RE: Rides to the Polls for WCU Students - College Democrats at WCU

Thanks, Chief.

From: Steve Lillard <sdlillard@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, February 4, 2026 5:37 PM
To: Shea Browning <srbrowning@email.wcu.edu>; Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Sam Miller <sammiller@email.wcu.edu>; Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Rides to the Polls for WCU Students - College Democrats at WCU

Yes Sir,

That is correct.

I am sure the county would not mind us helping but we would be accepting a lot of liability.

They would need to coordinate with the highway patrol for the roadways off campus and I am not sure how much support they would receive.

Steve

Western Carolina University

Steven D. Lillard
Chief of Police
Western Carolina University Police
Western Carolina University | Camp Annex
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.7301 | sdlillard@email.wcu.edu

From: Shea Browning <srbrowning@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, February 4, 2026 4:49 PM
To: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Sam Miller <sammiller@email.wcu.edu>; Steve Lillard <sdlillard@email.wcu.edu>; Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Rides to the Polls for WCU Students - College Democrats at WCU

Jeff,

Can you respond with something like the following:

"For the March to the Polls event, you will need to fill out the appropriate paperwork for the on-campus portion of the event, including the area around the Catafount. Regarding the walk off campus. Your safety is our first priority. We strongly recommend that you shuttle to the polling place and not walk on or adjacent to public roads that are in use. University Police only have jurisdiction on campus and will not be able to accompany the marchers off campus or to the polling place."

Feel free to put this into your words, but I need the recommendation to remain.

Chief - Is that last sentence correct?

Don't share this email.

Shea Browning

General Counsel

From: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>
Date: Wednesday, February 4, 2026 at 2:36 PM
To: Sam Miller <sammiller@email.wcu.edu>, Steve Lillard <sdlillard@email.wcu.edu>, Shea Browning <srbrowning@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Paul Hammer <pwhammer@email.wcu.edu>, Tim Lewis <tlewis@email.wcu.edu>, Coleman Leopard <wcleopard@email.wcu.edu>, Wes Taylor <wrtaylor@email.wcu.edu>, Michael Rymell <mrymell@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: FW: Rides to the Polls for WCU Students - College Democrats at WCU

Please read below.

Our team is scheduling a meeting with [redacted] to get more details. I wanted to give you a heads up.

Thanks, and take care.

From: Paul Hammer <pwhammer@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, February 4, 2026 1:33 PM
To: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: FW: Rides to the Polls for WCU Students - College Democrats at WCU

Best regards,

Melissa Wargo

From: Shea Browning
Sent: Wednesday, February 4, 2026 3:42 PM
To: Melissa Wargo; Bruce Barker
Subject: FW: Rides to the Polls for WCU Students - College Democrats at WCU

FYI

Shea Browning
General Counsel

From: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>
Date: Wednesday, February 4, 2026 at 2:36 PM
To: Sam Miller <sammiller@email.wcu.edu>, Steve Lillard <sdlillard@email.wcu.edu>, Shea Browning <srbrowning@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Paul Hammer <pwhammer@email.wcu.edu>, Tim Lewis <tlewis@email.wcu.edu>, Coleman Leopard <wcleopard@email.wcu.edu>, Wes Taylor <wrtaylor@email.wcu.edu>, Michael Rymell <mrymell@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: FW: Rides to the Polls for WCU Students - College Democrats at WCU

Please read below.

Our team is scheduling a meeting with [redacted] to get more details. I wanted to give you a heads up.

Thanks, and take care.

From: Paul Hammer <pwhammer@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, February 4, 2026 1:33 PM
To: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: FW: Rides to the Polls for WCU Students - College Democrats at WCU

Best regards,

Western Carolina University

Paul Hammer
Associate Director for Guest Services
Department of Campus Activities
Western Carolina University | University Center 210N
1 University Way, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.2393 | pwhammer@email.wcu.edu
Pronouns: he/him/his

Fro[redacted]
Sent: Wednesday, February 4, 2026 1:28 PM

Melissa Wargo

From: Carol Burton
Sent: Tuesday, February 3, 2026 5:19 PM
To: Melissa Wargo
Subject: Fw: CLARIFICATION: WCU Shuttles
Attachments: 20260203155621848.pdf

YI,

Carol

Carol Burton
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University

From: Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, February 3, 2026 4:38:20 PM
To: Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Fw: CLARIFICATION: WCU Shuttles

Forwarding this to you as well. In relation to the other forward that I sent.

My best,
Joy

Western Carolina University

VOTING is Social Work

Joy Mischley, MSW, LCSW
Director
Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning
Western Carolina University | 273 Belk
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.2643 | jmischley@wcu.edu
Pronouns: she/her/hers

WNC MOUNTAIN LIFE

From: Amanda Allen <amandaallen@jacksonnc.org>
Sent: Tuesday, February 3, 2026 4:27 PM
To: Daniel Landa <daniellanda@jacksonnc.org>; Kylee Muench - BOE <kyleemuench@jacksonnc.org>; Shannon Quinn

<shannonquinn@jacksonnc.org>; Trey Franks <treyfranks@jacksonnc.org>
Cc: Bill Thompson <billthompson@jacksonnc.org>; Jay Pavey <jaypavey@jacksonnc.org>; Wes Hanemayer <weshanemayer@jacksonnc.org>; Betsy Swift <betsyswift@jacksonnc.org>; Roy Osborn <royosborn@jacksonnc.org>; Keith Blaine <Keith.Blaine@proton.me>; Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: CLARIFICATION: WCU Shuttles

WARNING: This email originated from a non-WCU email account. Do not click links or open attachments unless you are confident the content is safe.

For those attending today's BOE Meeting:

Before posting at our office or otherwise sharing, I reached out to WCU's Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning (CCESL) about the flyer shared at today's meeting.

PLEASE NOTE: The flyer we received (copy attached) is outdated and inaccurate; I would not recommend re-sharing that flyer. CCESL is creating and will share new flyers. If students have questions in the meantime, they should contact Jenna Kubiak at CCESL (jkubiak@email.wcu.edu).

WCU Transportation will be providing a van shuttle (not CatTran) on weekdays during Early Voting (2/12-27) from the University Center to the Cullowhee Rec EV site. Additionally, WCU Transportation will provide services on Election Day, March 3.

I will share any follow-up information and updates as we receive them.

Thanks!

E-mail correspondence to and from this address may be subject to the North Carolina Public Records Law and may be disclosed to third parties by an authorized county official.

WCU Voting Shuttle

Every Weekday from Feb 12th-27th

MONDAY - WEDNESDAY

12:00 pm – 3:00 pm

THURSDAY - FRIDAY

2:30 – 4:30 pm

Need a ride?

SIGN UP TODAY

Located behind the dining hall at the roundabout

Melissa Wargo

From: Melissa Wargo
Sent: Tuesday, February 3, 2026 5:07 PM
To: Carol Burton
Subject: RE: Message from "RNP5838795A2C82"

Yes, we need to remember that he is here very frequently and is often in the UC.

Western Carolina University

Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Office of the Chancellor
Western Carolina University | H.F. Robinson, Suite 501
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.7100 | c: (828) 399.1230 | wargo@wcu.edu

From: Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, February 3, 2026 5:03 PM
To: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Fw: Message from "RNP5838795A2C82"

Smh.

Carol

Carol Burton
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University

From: Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, February 3, 2026 4:29:11 PM
To: Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Fw: Message from "RNP5838795A2C82"

Hi Carol,

Forwarding you the enclosed email chain, just for your information. It seems like Keith Blaine, Chair of the Jackson County Republic Party, picked up one of the old van shuttle flyers in the UC before they were all removed.

My best,
Joy

Joy Mischley, MSW, LCSW
Director
Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning
Western Carolina University | 273 Belk
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.2643 | jmischley@wcu.edu
Pronouns: she/her/hers

From: Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, February 3, 2026 4:21 PM
To: Amanda Allen <amandaallen@jacksonnc.org>; Jenna Kubiak <jkubiak@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Message from "RNP5838795A2C82"

One quick addition... for both early voting and election day, the shuttle will be a van (not Cat Tran).

My best,
Joy

Joy Mischley, MSW, LCSW
Director
Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning
Western Carolina University | 273 Belk
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.2643 | jmischley@wcu.edu
Pronouns: she/her/hers

From: Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, February 3, 2026 4:19 PM
To: Amanda Allen <amandaallen@jacksonnc.org>; Jenna Kubiak <jkubiak@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Message from "RNP5838795A2C82"

Hi Amanda,

Those flyers are outdated and not accurate. If you are able to communicate that to Keith, I would be appreciative.

We are working on finalizing new flyers about the official WCU van shuttle for students, which we will share on campus. If students have questions, they are welcome to contact Jenna.

We will also share a brief overview of the official WCU van shuttle in our upcoming community partner newsletter, which will be similar to the information below. The following can also be communicated to people that may be asking you about WCU shuttles.

"WCU Transportation will provide a van shuttle on weekdays during the early voting period (February 12 through February 27), from the University Center to the early voting site at the Jackson County Recreation Center in Cullowhee. Additionally, WCU Transportation will provide service on Election Day, March 3."

Thank you for reaching out!

My best,
Joy

Western Carolina University

VOTING is Social Work

WNC MOUNTAIN LIFE

Joy Mischley, MSW, LCSW
Director
Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning
Western Carolina University | 273 Belk
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.2643 | jmischley@wcu.edu
Pronouns: she/her/hers

From: Amanda Allen <amandaallen@jacksonnc.org>
Sent: Tuesday, February 3, 2026 4:02 PM
To: Jenna Kubiak <jkubiak@email.wcu.edu>; Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Fwd: Message from "RNP5838795A2C82"

WARNING: This email originated from a non-WCU email account. Do not click links or open attachments unless you are confident the content is safe.

Afternoon, Joy & Jenna.

Copies of this flyer were provided in the public comment section of today's meeting by JC GOP Chair Keith Blaine; he found it at WCU and had copies made at the UC. I couldn't get the QR code to work on my phone, just wanted to follow up on details. Is this where we should direct folks if they're asking about WCU shuttles?

---------- Forwarded message ---------
From: <ricohscanner@jacksonnc.org>
Date: Tue, Feb 3, 2026 at 3:57 PM
Subject: Message from "RNP5838795A2C82"
To: Amanda Allen <Amandaallen@jacksonnc.org>

This E-mail was sent from "RNP5838795A2C82" (IM 3500).

Scan Date: 02.03.2026 15:56:21 (-0500)
Queries to: ricohscanner@jacksonnc.org
--
E-mail correspondence to and from this address
may be subject to the North
Carolina Public Records Law and may be disclosed to
third parties by an
authorized county official.

E-mail correspondence to and from this address may be subject to the North Carolina Public Records Law and may be disclosed to third parties by an authorized county official.

Melissa Wargo

From: Carol Burton
Sent: Monday, February 2, 2026 9:39 AM
To: Melissa Wargo; Joy Mischley
Cc: Renee Miller
Subject: Re: Schedule for Early Voting Shuttle

Excellent. Thanks Melissa. We will do.

Carol

Carol Burton
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University

From: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Sunday, February 1, 2026 9:09:39 PM
To: Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>; Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Renee Miller <reneemiller@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Schedule for Early Voting Shuttle

Hi all,

Hoping you're staying warm! Here is the schedule from Bruce Barker below for the voting shuttle. Also, could you all arrange with the print shop to have magnetic signs printed for the side doors on the van. It can say "WCU Early Voting Shuttle". We can pay for it from the chancellor's office. I'm copying Renee in case you need a budget code. Thanks, M!

"WCU Transportation will provide service during the early voting period, February 12 through February 27, from the University Center to the early voting site at the Jackson County Recreation Center in Cullowhee, Monday through Friday between 12:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. Transportation will run on a 30-minute cycle, with stops scheduled on the hour and half-hour throughout the duration of the service window.

Additionally, WCU Transportation will provide service on Election Day, March 3, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Transportation on Election Day will also run on a 30-minute cycle, with stops scheduled on the hour and half-hour throughout the day."

—-
Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Western Carolina University

Melissa Wargo

From: Bruce Barker
Sent: Sunday, February 1, 2026 9:02 PM
To: Melissa Wargo; Mike Byers
Subject: Re: Thoughts?

Yes ma'am.

Bruce W. Barker, Jr.
Chief Purchasing Officer
Purchasing and Accounts Payable
Western Carolina University | 301 H.F. Robinson Administration Building
1 University Way, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.3100 | bbarker@email.wcu.edu

Did you know Western Carolina University now offers an electronic payment method for all received invoices? Copy or click the link below for more information. http://www.bofaml.com/virtualpayables

---

From: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Sunday, February 1, 2026 9:01 PM
To: Bruce Barker <bbarker@email.wcu.edu>; Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Thoughts?

Haha! How about I just have CESL get two magnetic signs printed that say "WCU Early Voting Shuttle"?

—-
Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Western Carolina University

From: Bruce Barker <bbarker@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Sunday, February 1, 2026 8:59:33 PM
To: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>; Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Thoughts?

I don't mind doing it tomorrow. I might jazz it up if you'd like, maybe "Melissa Wargo presents the WCU early voting van"?

Or I'll just keep it as is..

b

Bruce W. Barker, Jr.
Chief Purchasing Officer
Purchasing and Accounts Payable
Western Carolina University | 301 H.F. Robinson Administration Building
1 University Way, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.3100 | bbarker@email.wcu.edu

Did you know Western Carolina University now offers an electronic payment method for all received invoices? Copy or click the link below for more information. http://www.bofaml.com/virtualpayables

---

From: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Sunday, February 1, 2026 8:50 PM
To: Bruce Barker <bbarker@email.wcu.edu>; Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Thoughts?

I can share with them the schedule you provided me below. Just to clarify - CESL should arrange for a magnetic sign for the van that notes it as the early voting shuttle? I'm happy to direct them to do that, I just want to make sure we're not duplicating effort.

Thanks, Bruce!
M

—-
Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Western Carolina University

From: Bruce Barker <bbarker@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Sunday, February 1, 2026 8:43:11 PM
To: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>; Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Thoughts?

Yes ma'am. I'm assuming that community engagement has engaged the print shop. Would you like me to provide the statement to Carol or Joy?

b

Bruce W. Barker, Jr.
Chief Purchasing Officer
Purchasing and Accounts Payable
Western Carolina University | 301 H.F. Robinson Administration Building
1 University Way, Cullowhee, NC 28723

o: (828) 227.3100 | bbarker@email.wcu.edu

Did you know Western Carolina University now offers an electronic payment method for all received invoices? Copy or click the link below for more information. http://www.bofaml.com/virtualpayables

---

From: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, January 30, 2026 9:14 PM
To: Bruce Barker <bbarker@email.wcu.edu>; Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Thoughts?

I like it. Should you add a sentence telling them to look for the van marked WCU Early Voting Shuttle? I wonder kids might be looking for a regular Tran. What do you think?

—-
Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Western Carolina University

From: Bruce Barker <bbarker@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, January 30, 2026 8:58:43 PM
To: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>; Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Fw: Thoughts?

Hey Melissa, you good with wording and logistics information? Thanks.

WCU Transportation will provide service during the early voting period, February 12 through February 27, from the University Center to the early voting site at the Jackson County Recreation Center in Cullowhee, Monday through Friday between 12:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. Transportation will run on a 30-minute cycle, with stops scheduled on the hour and half-hour throughout the duration of the service window.

Additionally, WCU Transportation will provide service on Election Day, March 3, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Transportation on Election Day will also run on a 30-minute cycle, with stops scheduled on the hour and half-hour throughout the day.

Western Carolina University

Bruce W. Barker, Jr.
Chief Purchasing Officer
Purchasing and Accounts Payable
Western Carolina University | 301 H.F. Robinson Administration Building
1 University Way, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.3100 | bbarker@email.wcu.edu

Did you know Western Carolina University now offers an electronic payment method for all received invoices?

Melissa Wargo

From: Carol Burton
Sent: Friday, January 30, 2026 4:42 PM
To: Carol Burton
Cc: Joy Mischley
Subject: Early Voting Support for Students - Transportation to Polling Site

Colleagues: we are promoting and supporting student civic engagement through voting as we do in every election season. To that end, and in light of the closing of our on-campus polling site in Cullowhee, WCU is providing daily **weekday** shuttle service for early voting (February 12-27, 2026)* and on election day (March 3, 2026) to our closest polling station at the Cullowhee Recreation Center for the Primaries. The shuttle will depart from behind the University Center to transport students to and from the polling station. The University is providing this shuttle as part of our institutional mission to foster civic participation and learning. Please direct interested students to utilize the official WCU shuttle. Departure and pick up schedule, as well as other voting-related information, will be shared broadly with students next week.

*Early Voting extends to Saturday, February 28th

Regards,

Carol Burton
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University

Melissa Wargo

From: Carol Burton
Sent: Friday, January 30, 2026 3:41 PM
To: Melissa Wargo
Subject: Re: DRAFT: Early and Election Day Voting Support for Students

Great, thanks, M.

Carol

Carol Burton
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University

From: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, January 30, 2026 3:34:09 PM
To: Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: DRAFT: Early and Election Day Voting Support for Students

Carol,

I confirmed that we can offer Election Day transport. Bruce is working up the schedule and will get it to us soon. For now, I am fine with the message below.

Thanks!
M

—-
Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Western Carolina University

From: Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, January 30, 2026 2:16:10 PM
To: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: DRAFT: Early and Election Day Voting Support for Students

M, if you have time in the car, please see below. I would like to start sharing the messaging. Richard is tied up with weather related decisions so let me know if you have any feedback. From whom can we expect the details on shuttle that Bruce was finalizing and will there be all day shuttle on election day? Thanks very much; Joy is also very pleased for the support.

Early and Election Day Voting Support for Students - Transportation to Polling Site

We continue to support and promote student civic engagement through voting as we do in every election season. To that end, in light of the closing of our on-campus polling site, WCU willl be providing daily weekday shuttle service for students for early polling (February 12-27) and election day (March 3) to our closest polling station at the Cullowhee Recreation Center for the Primaries. The shuttle will depart from behind the University Center to transport students to and from the polling station. Please direct students to use the University's shuttle for voting as part of our institutional pledge to ensure they have an accessible and secure polling site. Departure and pick up schedule will be shared broadly in advance. Many thanks for your support.

carol

Carol Burton
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University

Melissa Wargo

From: Melissa Wargo
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2026 10:53 AM
To: Carol Burton
Attachments: Faculty Senate_January2026_Report.docx

—-

Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Western Carolina University

Chancellor Kelli R. Brown

Faculty Senate Report – January 2026

Happy New Year! Welcome back for Spring 2026. I hope you all had a wonderful break and that you took some time for friends and family and for yourself. Dennis and I enjoyed the time away with our family. We've had a great start of the semester, and I look forward to working with you in support of students this Spring.

BUDGET UPDATE

As you may be aware, the NC General Assembly has still yet to reach an agreement on a state budget for the current biennium. We continue to advocate for our institutional priorities including salary increases for faculty and staff, performance funding, NC Promise funding, and capital funding increases for our new Engineering building. And, hopefully, we will see some movement soon from the General Assembly.

Some of you may have attended a meeting of my Chancellor's Leadership Council last week. At that meeting, we shared some high-level information on the State budget picture. We also heard some updates about WCU's budget picture, which overall is one of fiscal good health, as well as some brief updates about some strategies we are implementing that will help us plan more strategically. The main strategy we recently enacted is known as the FRIP. See more about the FRIP below.

WCU'S EARLY VOTING SITE

I am disappointed that the NC State Board of Elections upheld Jackson County's decision to close the early voting site on the WCU campus. This decision came despite direct assurances from me and others on campus that the University would make all possible accommodations to ensure an accessible and secure polling site. Know that we will continue to do all we can to support and promote civic engagement through voting, service, and outreach. We will also continue to seek opportunities for a new early voting site on campus should the County and State Board wish to revisit the decision.

WEBSITE REDESIGN

The WCU website's redesign project is moving into its final stretch, and the new site will officially launch on February 2. This is the first major overhaul of the website in over ten years, and the updated design will offer a new look, improved navigation, more modern security features, and a better experience for prospective students, current students, faculty, and staff. At this time, the Web team has trained our web editors and will continue to offer additional training until and after the new website is launched. The Web team will also continue refining content and testing key features to ensure a smooth

transition. As you might expect, though, with a website of nearly 5,000 pages, we do anticipate that users may encounter issues. **All troubleshooting requests after the launch next week should be directed to go.wcu.edu/webticket.**

Thank you for your support as we prepare to introduce a site that reflects the energy and excellence of our campus community. If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to Mr. Paul Garner, Director of Communications and Marketing at pgarner@wcu.edu.

FACULTY REALIGNMENT INCENTIVE PROGRAM

Earlier this month, Provost Starnes announced that WCU will be implementing a new program this spring, the Faculty Realignment Incentive Program. You all should have received an email from the Provost with additional information but in case you missed it, in 2023, the University of North Carolina System created the Faculty Realignment Incentive Program (FRIP) to provide a mechanism for "UNC System constituent institutions to offer retirement incentives to faculty who have played a vital role on their campus and will assist institutions in proactively planning for successful faculty transitions into retirement."

The FRIP program is completely voluntary, and eligible faculty members must opt in. The program is only available to WCU faculty employed in a permanent, benefits-eligible, tenured position with a full time equivalent of 0.75 or greater, a minimum age of 55, and at least 10 years of continuous service to UNC institutions. Tenured faculty members currently holding a primarily administrative role are not eligible for the program. Final decisions on participation in the program are at the discretion of the university, and participation in the program is not an employee entitlement. Faculty who meet the criteria for eligibility to participate in the FRIP program have been contacted directly by the Office of the Provost with more information.

Questions about the FRIP program can be directed to Provost Starnes or Dr. Cory Causby in Human Resources.

UNIVERSITY ACCOLADES

WCU Names Renovated Women's Basketball Locker Room in Honor of Program Matriarch— The women's basketball locker room was officially named the Betty Westmoreland Suhre Basketball Locker Room during a ceremony Friday, Dec. 12, in the Liston B. Ramsey Regional Activity Center in honor of the program's founder. WCU alumnae and former basketball players Nora Lynn Finch, Judy Stroud and Donna Winbon in 2024 made gifts and pledges of $25,000 apiece for a total of $75,000, also urging other former players to contribute to the effort. Additional donations have pushed the amount raised beyond the $100,000 total required by university guidelines to affix the former coach's name to the space following approval earlier this year by the WCU Board of Trustees.

Martin Tanaka Secures NC Innovation Funding for New Medical Device— Martin Tanaka, a professor of engineering and technology at Western Carolina University, has a knack for creating innovative gadgets as a biomedical engineer. He has two patents for medical devices: one to help with rotator cuff surgery

and another for a surgical tool for nasal surgery. Now, thanks to funding from NC Innovation, Tanaka is going for his third patent. Tanaka received $1 million worth of funding from NC Innovation to develop an innovative device to treat lymphedema, a complication from breast cancer surgery that can also affect anyone who has other types of cancer or major surgeries.

Shelton Laurel: An Appalachian Opera— Last Friday evening WCU's Bardo Arts Center hosted the world premiere of Shelton Laurel: An Appalachian Opera which was written by WCU professor and composer, Dr. Damon Sink. The production explores the tragic hardships faced by settlers in Western North Carolina during the time of the American Civil War. Set in rural Madison County, the opera's story is a powerful account of families torn by fear, mistrust, and violence, and of the transformative power of community. Congratulations to Dr. Damon Sink on an incredible opening night!

$35K URPA Grant Will Support Engineering Students to Develop AI Manufacturing Skills— Abdallah Abdallah, an associate professor in Western Carolina University's College of Engineering and Technology, has received the UNC System Office's Undergraduate Research Program Award, a $35,000 grant that allows students to gain experience that will benefit their academic and professional careers. The URPA grant will fund student research surrounding AI in smart manufacturing and will help WCU's engineering students bridge the gap between the classroom and the workforce.

WCU's Hikkaduwa, Melton Named to All-SoCon Faculty and Staff Team— Dr. Rangika Hikkaduwa, an associate professor of chemistry, and Ms. Suzanne Melton, a Research Programs Coordinator within the Office of Research Administration and Program Director for the Catalyst: Summer Research and Leadership Program, were named Western Carolina University's representatives on the 2025-26 All-Southern Conference Faculty and Staff team by the conference office. I'm proud of both of them for this recognition!

Student Philanthropists Feted at Fall Semester Senior Toast— Western Carolina University leaders raised a celebratory toast to members of the December 2025 graduating class who have already made financial contributions to their soon-to-be alma mater as student philanthropists. The seniors were the guests of honor at the fall semester Senior Toast on Monday, Dec. 1. They include the nearly 95 student members of WCU's 1889 Club, a giving society recognizing students and young alumni for their gifts in support of the university, and, for the first time, members of the Student Catamount Club.

WCU Photography Class Restores Damaged Photos Lost During Helene— Western Carolina University assistant professor Rebekah Alviani's Intro to Digital Photography class is digitally restoring photos found by Taylor Schenker in the aftermath of Helene. Alviani's class is mostly restoring photos that have not been reunited with their owners in addition to touching up photos offered up by one woman. In the process, Alviani's students are picking up key skills in photo restoration while making a difference in their communities.

Thank you for all that you do for Western Carolina University!

Melissa Wargo

From: Jessica Woods
Sent: Tuesday, January 27, 2026 12:58 PM
To: Melissa Wargo
Subject: FW: NC A&T students take wheel on early voting after sites denied

From: Carolina Public Press <news@carolinapublicpress.org>
Sent: Tuesday, January 27, 2026 12:33 PM
To: Jessica Woods <jmwoods@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: NC A&T students take wheel on early voting after sites denied

WARNING: This email originated from a non-WCU email account. Do not click links or open attachments unless you are confident the content is safe.

View this email in your browser.

Tuesday, Jan. 27, 2026

Here's hoping things are starting to thaw out in your corner of the state!

For today, Sarah Michels reports on a group of students at NC A&T that has decided to take action after state and local election boards refused to include an early voting site for the primaries on their campus. In response, they've launched a movement to transport students to the polls this March.

— Sarah Lowery

Today's Top News From CPP

North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University juniors Shia Rozier and Terence Olu Rouse hold a press conference on Friday, Jan. 23, 2026, at the Beloved Community Center in Greensboro to discuss the launch of Protect Ours, a movement to transport students from campus to the polls this primary, after election boards denied requests to add early voting sites on campus. Sarah Michels / Carolina Public Press

‘Protect Ours.’ NC A&T students take the wheel on early voting.

Students at NC A&T object to mentality of letting ‘grown ups’ decide primaries, respond with organized service to drive students to vote.

By Sarah Michels

A NC A&T student came up to county elections board Democrat Carolyn Bunker in tears after the North Carolina State Board of Elections’ January meeting. The board had just voted 3-2 to exclude two Guilford County college campuses from early voting primary plans.

Unlike many of her fellow students, the student had a car. She told Bunker she felt pressure to drive her friends, her friends’ friends and her classmates to the polls — all while trying to balance schoolwork and a job.

Read the full story.

Recent CPP stories

- **Education:** Burke County schools announce revocation of ‘special media access’ for newspaper
- **Education:** Charges dismissed in controversial UNCG arrests. School doesn’t halt student disciplinary action.
- **Politics & Government:** Primary candidate challenges continue in NC, even as absentee voting has started

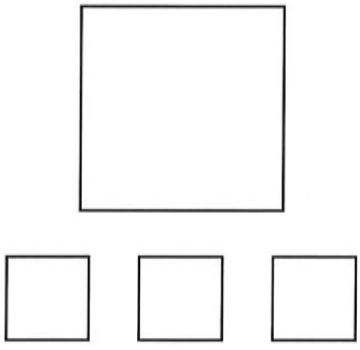
- **Environment:** 'Step backwards.' NC board's move to enact new water pollution rules faces scathing criticism.
- **Education:** New laws greet NC students, educators in 2026

Are you signed up to receive our other newsletters?

Our **Saturday morning roundup** features CPP's latest stories, behind-the-scenes insight from the team and more.

NEW: We've launched an **Election 2026 newsletter** by our very own politics staff reporter, Sarah Michels. It will take readers through the election cycle this year with regular updates, including news items that didn't make the headlines, recent coverage and important dates to mark.

Click here to learn more and subscribe for free!



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Raleigh, NC 27607

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Melissa Wargo

From: Joy Mischley
Sent: Thursday, January 22, 2026 11:48 AM
To: Jeffrey Hughes; Christy Agner
Cc: Melissa Wargo
Subject: Re: 2026 Hinds Center room reservations: Early Voting

Hi All,

We had a meeting of WCU's Civic Advisory Committee earlier this week. It was recommended that we wait for another week or two before releasing the multipurpose room. I'm not aware of any pending litigation. However, it has happened with college voting sites in the past, so seems prudent to give it a little bit more time.

Thank you for your patience and understanding.

My best,
Joy

Western Carolina University

VOTING is Social Work

Joy Mischley, MSW, LCSW
Director
Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning
Western Carolina University | 273 Belk
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.2643 | jmischley@wcu.edu
Pronouns: she/her/hers

From: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, January 13, 2026 4:38 PM
To: Christy Agner <cagner@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: 2026 Hinds Center room reservations: Early Voting

Thanks, Christy

Get Outlook for iOS

From: Christy Agner <cagner@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, January 13, 2026 2:49:13 PM
To: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: 2026 Hinds Center room reservations: Early Voting

Jeff,

While Joy will have more information and next step detail, the State Board of Elections voted today to accept the Jackson County Board of Elections plan, which excludes the WCU Hinds Center for the primary early voting period. I defer to Joy on actions, but at the appropriate time, those room reservations may be available to the campus population for alternate use.

Christy Agner
Western Carolina University

Melissa Wargo

From: Richard Starnes
Sent: Tuesday, January 13, 2026 3:06 PM
To: Carol Burton; Melissa Wargo
Cc: Christopher Cooper
Subject: RE: WCU Polling Site State Board of Elections' Decision

Damn

Best,

RDS
Richard D. Starnes
Provost & Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University
Cullowhee, NC 28723
(828) 227-7195

From: Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, January 13, 2026 2:52 PM
To: Richard Starnes <starnes@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Christopher Cooper <ccooper@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: WCU Polling Site State Board of Elections' Decision

Voting Site Update

At a Jackson County Board of Elections meeting, the board decided in a 3-2 vote to remove the on campus early voting site for the 2026 primary election. The State Board of Elections decided to maintain this decision to make the closest voting site, the Cullowhee Recreation Center for the primary election. This may change in future elections. Stay up-to-date on the voting site at NCSBE.gov/.

This information was shared in the CCESL January Faculty and Staff newsletter this afternoon.

Carol Burton
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University

Melissa Wargo

From: Christopher Cooper
Sent: Tuesday, January 13, 2026 2:54 PM
To: Carol Burton; Richard Starnes; Melissa Wargo
Subject: Re: WCU Polling Site State Board of Elections' Decision

Thanks, Carol. Good to know what's going out there.

Chris

From: Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>
Date: Tuesday, January 13, 2026 at 2:52 PM
To: Richard Starnes <starnes@email.wcu.edu>, Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Christopher Cooper <ccooper@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: WCU Polling Site State Board of Elections' Decision

Voting Site Update

At a Jackson County Board of Elections meeting, the board decided in a 3-2 vote to remove the on campus early voting site for the 2026 primary election. The State Board of Elections decided to maintain this decision to make the closest voting site, the Cullowhee Recreation Center for the primary election. This may change in future elections. Stay up-to-date on the voting site at NCSBE.gov/.

This information was shared in the CCESL January Faculty and Staff newsletter this afternoon.

Carol Burton
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University

Melissa Wargo

From: Jessica Woods
Sent: Monday, January 12, 2026 1:52 PM
To: Melissa Wargo; Joyce Carpenter
Cc: Christy Agner
Subject: RE: NCBOE_CKB Letter.docx
Attachments: NCBOE.docx

Christy,

Attached please find the NCBOE letter. Please let me know if you need anything else.

Thanks,

FILL THE WESTERN SKY THE CAMPAIGN for WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

Jessica M. Woods '18
Assistant to the Chancellor and
Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trustees
Chancellor's Office
Western Carolina University | 501 HF Robinson
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.3044 | c: (828) 506.5900 | jmwoods@wcu.edu
westernsky.wcu.edu

From: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Monday, January 12, 2026 12:54 PM
To: Jessica Woods <jmwoods@email.wcu.edu>; Joyce Carpenter <jacarpenter@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Christy Agner <cagner@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: FW: NCBOE_CKB Letter.docx
Importance: High

Can you please put this on letterhead with the Chancellor's signature and send to Christy Agner asap? She will ensure it is emailed to the Board of Elections.

Thanks,
M

Western Carolina UNIVERSITY

Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Office of the Chancellor
Western Carolina University | H.F. Robinson, Suite 501
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.7100 | c: (828) 399.1230 | wargo@wcu.edu

From: Christy Agner <cagner@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Monday, January 12, 2026 12:47 PM
To: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: NCBOE_CKB Letter.docx

Like it. If preferred, you could identify Dr. Cooper with the Haire Institute of Public Policy. Happy to forward over once approved, or send the addy to Jessica for distribution.

Christy Agner
Western Carolina University

From: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Monday, January 12, 2026 9:50:12 AM
To: Christy Agner <cagner@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: NCBOE_CKB Letter.docx

See what you think.

Thanks,
M

Western Carolina University

Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Office of the Chancellor
Western Carolina University | H.F. Robinson, Suite 501
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
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Western Carolina University

January 12, 2026

North Carolina State Board of Elections

430 N Salisbury St.

Raleigh, NC 27603

To members of the NC State Board of Elections:

Thank you for taking up the matter of the early voting site hosted by Western Carolina University. As you consider this decision tomorrow, please know that WCU remains very interested in hosting an early voting site and we hope that you will vote to allow WCU to remain an option for the County.

WCU prides itself on being a critical point of civic education for our students here in Western North Carolina and we have been grateful to offer this accessible polling site to promote voter turnout for WCU students, and employees and voters in the surrounding community. The site, first established in 2016, has been tremendously successful and popular. Further, the site aligns well with WCU's role as part of the American Democracy Project and the Student Democracy Coalition.

You may be interested in some of the data collected by Dr. Chris Cooper of WCU's Department of Political Science on voting patterns at the WCU site that speak to WCU's role in supporting young voter turnout. Seventeen percent of Jackson County registered voters are below the age of 26, the second highest percentage of young voters in the state. When it is so important to grow new voters in the democratic process, WCU's site has admirably filled that intent. In fact, WCU's site saw the youngest average voter of any site in the state in the 2024 primary and the second youngest in the general election.

Should the State Board ultimately decide to allow the site to continue here at WCU, know that we will continue to do everything possible to ensure a convenient and accessible site for our community. WCU is proud of its role in educating informed and engaged citizens of our state. Voting is a habitual practice that begins as a young adult, and we are supportive of continuing to provide a convenient and accessible environment on campus to the voters of Jackson County.

Thank you for your consideration and your service.

Sincerely yours,

Kelli R. Brown

Kelli R. Brown

Chancellor

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

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